

Friends Meeting House  
30 Farewell Street  
Newport  
Newport County  
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-310

HABS  
RI,  
3-NEWP,  
70-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

HABS  
RI  
3-NEWP  
70-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. RI-310

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE

Location: 30 Farewell Street

Present Owner: Newport Historical Society

Present Occupants: None, under restoration

Present Use: None. After the restoration the structure is intended to be used as a public meeting house and museum.

Significance: Built in 1700, with additions of 1730, 1807, 1857, and 1867, the original (center) portion is an important example of the square hip roofed and turreted structures being built for some thirty years, from about 1680 to 1710. An excellent exposed framing system with balcony and much of the original plastered wall finish is still extant. The hip roof and turret no longer exist. Newport was the seat of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends from as early as 1860 to 1905. The 1700 portion was built to house the annual influx of Friends. The subsequent additions were also made to accomodate the yearly throngs.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

The building is located in Plat 17, Lot 265. The following is an incomplete chain of title from Newport City Clerk's Records for the City of Newport. Reference is to number and volume of the Land Evidence Books, (LEB.--, p.--).

The Friends Meeting House stands on land originally owned by Nicholas Easton. Easton gave some of his land to the Friends presumably before 1672, by which time it is thought a first meeting house had been built. The deed for this transaction has been lost. Easton gave more land and a house in 1676. (Minutes of the Rhode Island Monthly Meeting, Book 807.) Ann Easton Bull gave additional land, to the north of the Meeting House property, in 1631. (Minutes of the Rhode Island Monthly Meeting, Book 807).

1922 Deed of May 4, 1922, recorded in LEB. 112, p.145.

From: The Overseers of the Rhode Island Monthly  
Meeting of the Society of Friends.  
To: The Newport Community Center Association, Inc.

"...Commencing at a point on Marlborough Street where  
herein after defined premises join the land of Maula.  
thence running Northerly seventy feet, bounded on the  
East by land of Maula; thence turning and running East-  
erly thirty nine 7/10 feet, bounded on the South by  
land of Maula, thence turning and running Northerly  
one hundred thirty five 1/10 feet, bounded on the East  
by land of Horgan, thence turning and running Northwest  
eighty nine feet, bounded on the Northwest by land of  
Levitre, thence turning and running Northeast, three  
75/100 feet, bounded on the South by land of Levitre,  
thence turning and running Northwest one hundred fifty  
3/10 feet, bounded on the Northeast by land of Burman,  
Libby Estate and Brightman, thence turning and running  
Southwest nine 3/10 feet, bounded on the North by land  
of Burke, thence turning and running Northwest again  
forty eight 1/10 feet, bounded on the East by the land  
of Burke, thence turning and running Southwest eighty  
one 4/10 feet, bounded on the Northwest by land of De  
Courcy, thence turning and running Southeast forty  
1/10 feet, bounded on the West by land of Simmons;  
Trustee, thence turning and running South one hundred  
thirty four 85/100 feet, bounded on the West by land of  
the Methodist Church and land of Sherman, thence turning  
and running Southwest eight feet, bounded on the North-  
west by land of Sherman, thence turning and running  
South forty seven feet, bounded on the North by land of  
this grantor, thence turning and running South one hun-  
dred sixty six 85/100 feet to Marlborough Street, bounded  
on the West by land of this grantor and land of Riley and  
Dennison, thence turning and running East sixty three  
25/100 feet, bounded on the South by Marlborough Street  
to the point or place of beginning...containing 51,370  
square feet..."

1967 Deed of February 20, 1967, recorded in LEB. 112, p.145.

From: The Newport Community Center Association, Inc.  
To: Sydney L. Wright

1970 Deed of November 4, 1970, recorded in LEB. 231, p.21.

From: Newport Restoration Foundation  
To: Newport Historical Society

1971 Deed of April 28, 1971, recorded in LEB. 232, p.113.

From: Catharine M. Wright, widow of Sydney L.  
To: Newport Historical Society

2. Date of erection: 1700, 1730, 1807, 1857, 1867.
3. Architect: Unknown
4. Builder or contractor: Unknown
5. Original plans: No original plans have been found. Orin M. Bullock, restoration architect, has created floor plans and elevations from the historical data. See "The Friends Meeting House in Newport, 1699-1922," Newport History, Bulletin of the Newport Historical Society, XLII (Spring, 1969), 25-59.
6. Alterations and additions: The growth of the structure from 1699 to 1867 has been documented during restoration. According to the Rhode Island Monthly Meeting, Book 807, an addition was contemplated for the convenience of the women's meeting March 22, 1705. No physical trace of this addition has been found. By July 29, 1730, the existing north end of the meeting house was completed. This has been known as the "ship room" because of the curved ceiling beams on the second floor. The third addition was built in 1807. This wing to the south included the installation of the huge, vertical, sliding shutters which, when open, enlarged the first floor into one large room. The fourth addition, the west wing, was built in substantially its present form in 1857. The last major change, the resurfacing of all the interior walls and the changing of many of the window sizes and locations, was completed in 1867.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

The Newport settlement of Friends was one of the earliest in America, with some of Newport's first settlers of 1638 (including William Coddington, Walter Newberry, John Coggeshall and Nicholas Easton) holding views akin to Quakerism. They and others soon became Friends and by 1750 half of Newport's population were Friends. Six of the English Friends from Robert Fowler's ship. "The Woodhouse" arrived in Newport in 1657. George Fox debated with Roger Williams in Newport (perhaps in a first Meeting House) in 1672. The New England Yearly Meeting held in Newport as early as 1661, continued here until 1895, then, on alternate years, until 1905. The 1700 Meeting House was built to take care of the annual influx of Friends, and was enlarged each time for the same reason. The building was criticized as ostentatious from the first each time when objections to the "lanthorn" were made before the building was finished. It was described by visitors such as George Keith (visited in June 1702). Travelling Quakers came: including Edward Peckover, England, (visited in 1743) and James Birket, Antigua, (visiting in 1750). John Woolman, best known American born Quaker of Colonial times, visited in 1760 and called a special Meeting House against keeping slaves. Among others were John Griffith and

Joseph Oxley, both English Quakers. There are many letters from Friends describing their experiences during yearly meeting in Newport. Five thousand persons were attending each year by 1743 and great crowds came each year until late in the nineteenth century.

C. Sources of Information:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

1. Miscellaneous accounts, receipts, series of deeds, maps, etc. belonging to the Rhode Island Monthly Meeting. Rhode Island Historical Society)

Records of the Rhode Island Monthly Meeting. Men's Minutes. (7 volumes 1676-1875) Newport Historical Society  
Records, Proprietors of Easton's Point, (1 volume, 1773-1899)  
Volumes prior to 1773 have been missing since before 1804.  
See note under that date in NHS Book 828A, Quaker Records, 173.

Men's and Women's Meetings (1 volume 1875- ) Newport Historical Society.

Yearly Meeting Records, Men's Minutes, (Volumes 101-108, 1683-1895) John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R.I.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Bowden, James, History of the Society of Friends in America.  
London: Charles Gilpin, 1850, 2 vols.

Bull, Henry 4th, "Memoir of Rhode Island," a Chronological History of Newport, published 1832-1836.

Hull, William I. "The Early History of the Friends in Newport, R.I." in Early Religious Leaders of Newport, Rhode Island, Newport: Mercury Publishing Co. 1918.

Inventory of the Church Archives of Rhode Island, Society of Friends, Historical Records Survey, Works Progress Administration, 1931. Contains an excellent bibliography.

Jones, Rufus M. The Quakers in the American Colonies,  
London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1909.

Miscellaneous notebooks in the Newport Historical Society Collections, kept by George Richardson and others, unpublished.

Downing, Antoinette F. "History of the Friends Meeting House, in Newport, Rhode Island", Newport History, Vol. 41 part 4 #132 Fall, 1968, pp.137-168.

Bullock, Orin M. Jr. F.A.I.A. "The Friend's Meeting House  
1699-1922." Newport History, vol. 42, part 2 #134 Spring  
1969 pp. 25-59.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Excellent example of framed construction, one of the few extant square hip-roofed meeting houses in existence. Additions of 1730 and 1807 also interesting and give a sequence of change in architectural treatment.
2. Condition of fabric: Being restored at present, architect, Orin M. Bullock, Jr.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Built in five periods. Present dimensions approximately 120' x 83' (L-shaped).
2. Foundations: Originally, flat fieldstone (gneiss) laid up dry. Many repairs, building set on large stones. Originally no cellar.
3. Wall construction: 1700 and 1730 sections. Vertical boarded. Boards let into plates and sills, hand split lath, plaster (unpainted). Exterior originally clapboarded, then shingled, now clapboarded. 1807 stud construction, accordion lath, plastered, painted greenish yellow. Shingled exterior unpainted. 1857, with plaster on sawn lath, exterior clapboard, interior finished with paneled wainscoting and late Greek Revival detail. Painted, but color not known. 1867 same. All now clapboarded (after 1857 and 1867).
4. Structural system, framing: 1700 (original part), about 45' x 45', two story, braced frame, exposed beams with chamfered edges, gun-stock posts, curved brackets to support balcony and ceiling timbers. Faces of vertical structural timbers have been cut away to take later boxing. Brackets have been removed. Originally open to roof. Turret and steeple removed c. 1807 and whole covered with a long gable roof.  
  
1730 - (addition) about 40' x 45', two story gable, roof. Originally clapboarded, frame with boxed corner posts; curved, exposed, and boxed ceiling beams. Plastered walls and ceiling.  
  
1807 - Addition at south end, two story gable. Originally shingled, now clapboarded with interior balconies on three sides. (Originally, only the one on the west remains.) Frame with boxed corner posts. Plastered walls and ceiling.

1857 - 52' x 12' two story gable addition on west front to house new stair case. Greek Revival with cornice carried across gable to form pediment. Clapboarded at present. Plastered walls and ceiling, Greek Revival detail.

1867 - 45' x 25' two story addition at east end of 1807 part. Clapboarded, now finished with 2 1/2" matched boards on interior.

5. Chimneys: At present, only one, in the north wall of the 1730 section, altered from original form in 1885.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways: 1700 section. Wide opening west front center, only remaining original entrance.

1730 section. Now has three openings, west center, (described above) and two at northwest corner, plain.

1807 section. None. Old print shows one story gable roof closed centered entry porch on west front. One, center, south side now closed.

1857 - Two plain with molded caps, one at north and south ends of west wall.

1867 - none?

- b. Windows: History is complex, measured drawing by Orin Bullock will give best information.

1700 section - Originally five bays across, original window frames remain on the balcony level, (east, north, and south sides,) about 2 1/2' x 4 1/2', now without sash. Those on the south wall filled with sliding boarded shutters probably installed in 1807. Somewhat larger windows appear on the main floor of the 1700 building, installed when the 1807 structure was added. No original sash. Some two-over-two, some six-over-six.

1730 - Upper windows plain board trim six-over-six sash about 2 1/2' x 4 1/2' altered, lower windows, some original frames about 2 1/2' x 4 1/2' set above a running horizontal, structural member about 4 1/2' above the floor. No original sash, no shutters.

1807 - Originally five across each side (five bays) about 2 1/2' x 4 1/2', six over six sash, exterior trim flat splayed lintel blocks, south end altered with colossal (three sash) windows replacing original.

1837 - Two large windows (three sash) to light stairway, Greek Revival trim, twelve over twelve sash. Lunette window in gable (glazed).

1867 - Four large three sash windows each on east, south and north wall.

- C. Shutters: Missing in 1700 and 1730 sections. Sliding shutters in windows on south wall balcony of 1700 section added in 1807.

Important shutters to divide men's meeting from women's meeting 1807 form large part of wall between 1700 and 1807 addition (4 sections) horizontal boarded, raise by pulley system operating in attic. Still operable. Marks on fixed portion of east shutter show location of elders bench.

7. Roof:

- 1700 - Original roof hipped with hip roof turret 10' x 10' and small steeple.
- 1730 - Gable, shingled.
- 1807 - Gable, shingled, extended at this time to cover 1700 section.
- 1857 - Gable, at right angles to main structure, shingled.

8. Porches, stoops, bulkheads:

- 1700 - None now existing, view before 1837 shows small one story closed porch with gable roof.
- 1730 - One small one story covered entry, now shingled on west front, may be original.
- 1807 - None existing, originally had small one story gable closed entry porch.
- 1857 - 52' x 12' addition on the west front built to provide double entries and house the stair cases to the upper floor of the men's and women's meetings.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans. See appendix for drawings.
2. Stairways. See appendix for original location of stairs in 1700, 1730, 1807. Sections now all removed, Main stairway now in 1857 section. One late stairway on south wall in 1730 section. Now shown in Bullock drawings.
3. Flooring:
  - 1700 - All original floor removed on first floor, wide boards in balcony.
  - 1730 - Original floor removed on first floor. Wide boarding (about (about 8' and 10') on second floor showing marks of pew locations.
  - 1807 - Original floor, boards 8' to 10' wide, with marks and holes and showing pew locations.



4. Wall and ceiling finish:

- 1700 - Plaster over hand split lath walls and ceiling originally open to rafters.
- 1730 - Plaster over hand split lath walls and ceiling the same. Boxed structural beams, with bead mold on corners, ceiling beams curved.
- 1807 - Plaster over expanded (accordion) lath, walls and ceiling same, boxed structural beams, with bead mold on corners.
- 1857 - Plaster over sawn lath, Greek Revival trim.

5. Doorways and doors: Many alterations, not studied fully.

6. Special decorative features:

- 1700 - Most have been removed, horizontal boarding on east wall back of elder's bench furnishings gone.
- 1730 - Cased beams, little else.
- 1807 - See section on shutters, most detail now missing.
- 1857 - Greek Revival.

7. Hardware: None.

8. Lighting: None worth noting except some mounts in 1700 building for candle sconces.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The house faces west toward Farewell Street.
- 2. Historic landscape design: Formerly planted in grass, with trees. Now mostly black top.
- 3. Outbuildings: Formerly carriage house, now none.

Prepared by: Antoinette F. Downing  
Historian  
National Park Service  
August, 1969

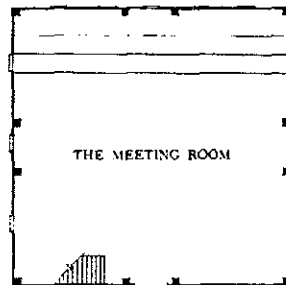
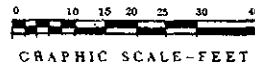
PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION:

Newport HABS Project -- 1969. Sponsored in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman. Under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, and Osmund Overby (University of Missouri), Project Supervisor, Jack E. Boucher, photographer.

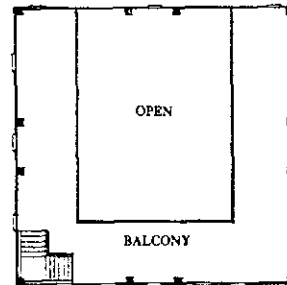
APPENDIX

Drawings by Orin M. Bullock, Jr., F.A.I.A., architect for the restoration.  
From "The Friends Meeting House in Newport 1699-1922" in Newport History,  
Spring, 1969. Courtesy of the Newport Historical Society.

GROWTH OF THE MEETING HOUSE



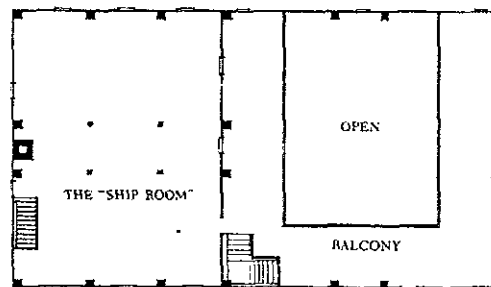
FIRST FLOOR



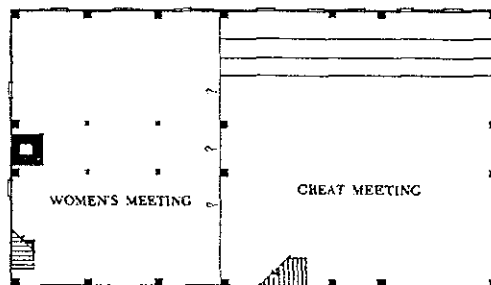
SECOND FLOOR

THE ORIGINAL BUILDING  
1699 TO 1705

NO EVIDENCE FOUND OF THE SIZE OR LOCATION OF ADDITION 1705 TO 1729



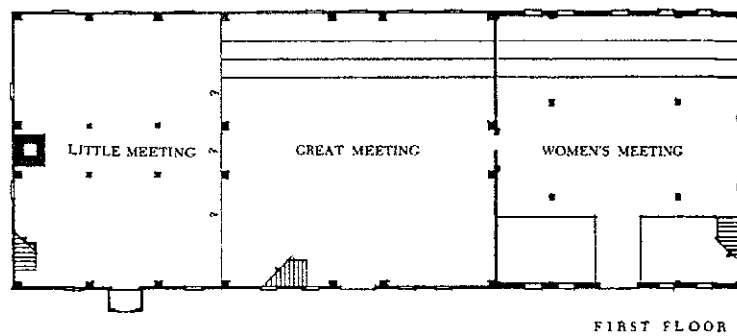
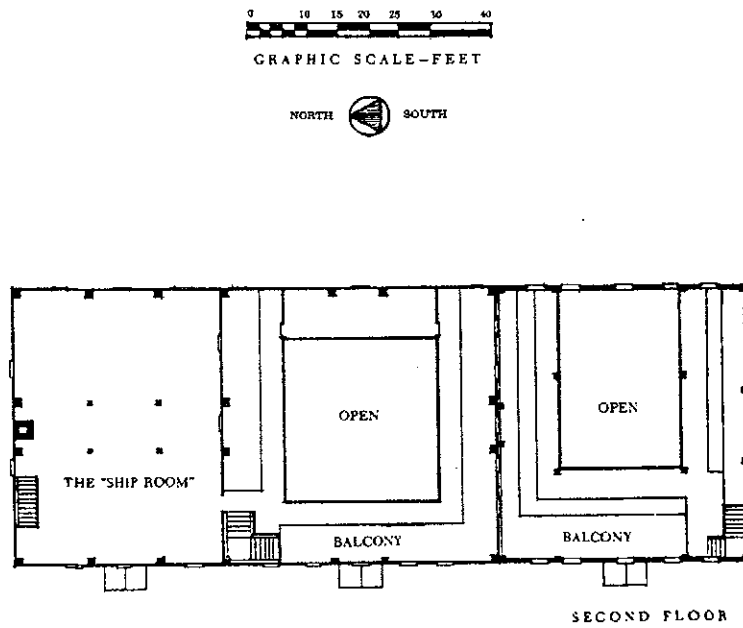
SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR

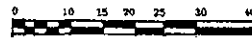
THE THIRD STAGE  
1729 TO 1807

## GROWTH OF THE MEETING HOUSE

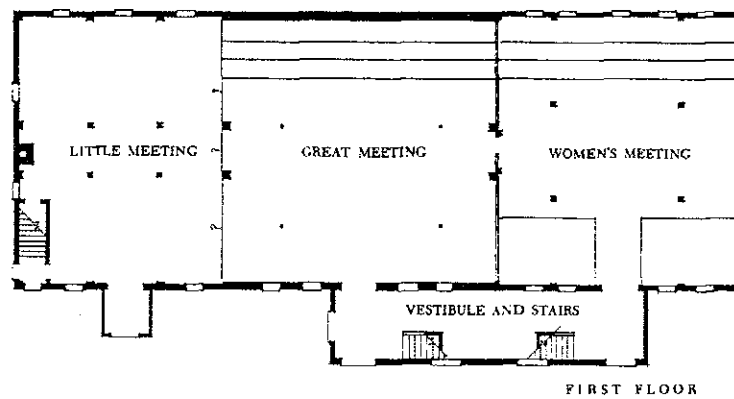
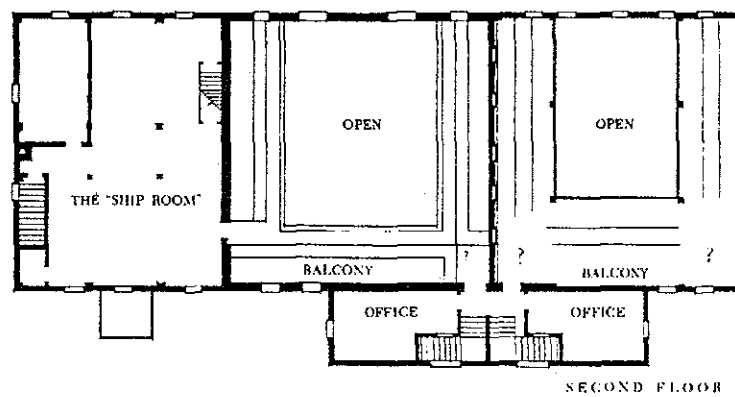


THE FOURTH STAGE  
1807 TO 1858

## GROWTH OF THE MEETING HOUSE

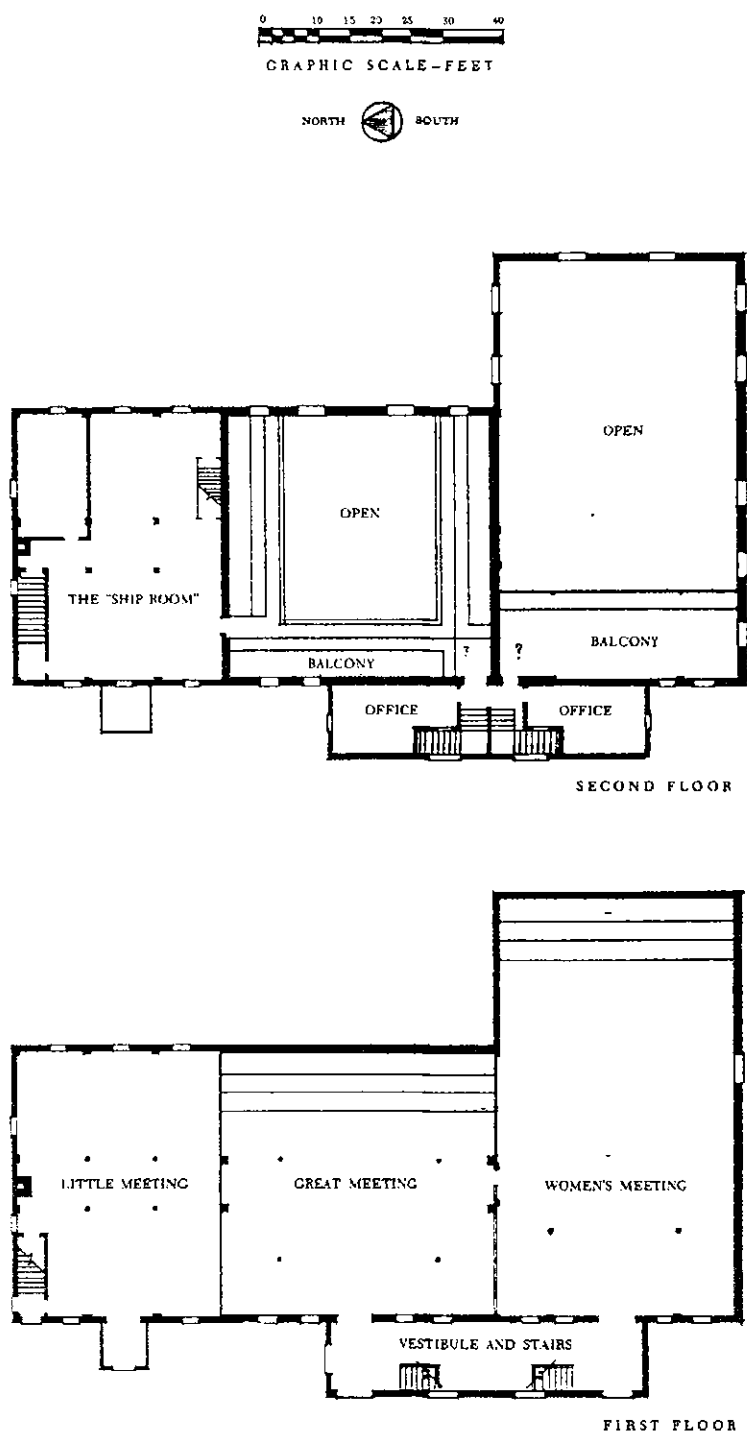


GRAPHIC SCALE- FEET



THE FIFTH STAGE  
1858 TO 1867

## GROWTH OF THE MEETING HOUSE



THE SIXTH STAGE  
1867 TO 1922